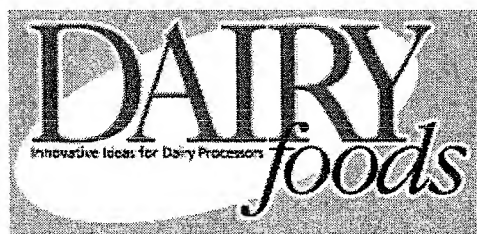


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Selling More Milk

Topping It Off: Caps and Closures

Fluid milk processors have traditionally viewed the milk container as merely an expense, one in which they constantly try to find the lowest cost solution. In fact, the container offers a great opportunity to act as a powerful marketing tool to help sell more milk, and at the same time, make it a more profitable item in their product portfolio. One way to do this is by changing the cap and closure system.



Caps and closures provide marketers much more than simply a means to contain a beverage. It can be one of the easiest ways to add value and create a point of difference in the competitive beverage marketplace.

Caps and closures are more than simply a means to keep a beverage in its container. Most importantly, caps and closures keep product fresh, prevent leakage

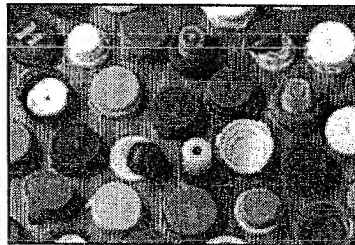
and ensure safety, through tamper-evident features (see story on safety and quality features). They also can be used for promotions, as marketing tools, for added convenience drinking and to turn an ordinary container into a collector's item.

When choosing a cap and closure system, the most important attributes to consider are seal security, capping efficiency and tamper evidence. These attributes vary by system, as well as by supplier. It's important to communicate with your supplier to understand how a system works with the container you use. Caps and closures cannot work alone. They work in partnership with the container.

Plastic offers most variety

There are a variety of cap and closure options for all fluid beverage containers. Plastic containers provide the most freedom in selection and are the focus of this article.

When it comes to plastic bottles, the blow-molded neck finish must complement the cap in order to successfully contain the product. To overcome many of the production and leakage problems that arise from incompatible neck finishes and caps, many of today's suppliers offer integrated systems (mold design, neck tooling and cap and closure selection) that work in combination with each other.



"Our customers' molds have to do more for them [today]," says one such supplier. "They may require a distinctive shape to separate their container from others, or an ability to apply varying labels.

Suppliers offer a variety of cap and closure systems. Safety seals are typically built into the cap.

"This trend is the result of recent consolidation of customers into larger, more centralized operations. These companies rely on distinctive packaging and a varied product mix to help grow their market share," he adds.

Dairies are most familiar with cap and closure systems for plastic gallon and half-gallon jugs. These caps measure 38mm in diameter and come in two basic styles: press-on and threaded.

Press-on caps allow for very efficient capping speeds during the bottling process. Consumers find it easy to snap the cap on and off. Press-on caps have an inner valve that creates a plug when it is snapped in place. Sometimes press-on caps include an inner seal for added freshness, but often the inner valve does not permit the use of any type of induction seal because the valve ridge could puncture the seal. However, for tamper evidence, press-on caps are almost always designed with a tear-away ring that unwinds from the cap, enabling it to be opened.

Threaded caps are designed to be either snapped or screwed on, and always screwed off. Snap-on caps, like press-on caps, typically allow for greater production line speeds.

Threaded caps can be either unlined and

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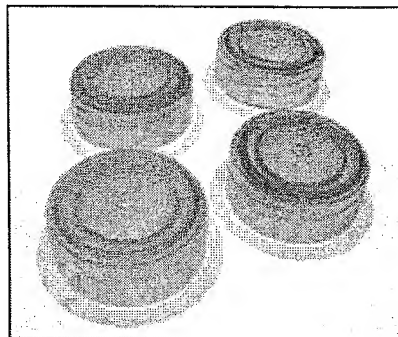
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plug-styled like the press-on cap, or they can be lined to create a heat-induction seal. In the past year, a variety of suppliers have started offering premium threaded caps that include features such as more threads to minimize chances of stripping and allow for maximum holding strength; a stronger and shortened bottle top lip to minimize collapsing during filling and create a superior seal; and a combined liner with valve ridge. In this last scenario, the plug valve is not as pronounced as traditional plug seals, so that it will not puncture the lining after it has been applied to the bottle opening. This type of cap provides total leak protection because the liner creates a seal before the container is opened, and then during refrigerated storage, the valve creates a leak-proof plug. Premium features can increase cap costs, but the actual and perceived benefits are well worth the investment.

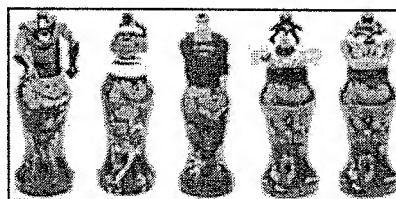


Jug caps no longer are limited to red for whole milk, blue for low-fat and pink for nonfat. Unique resins, such as translucent pastels, provide a point of distinction in the dairy case.

Liners form a seal through a heat induction process. Liners are meant to preserve freshness and provide tamper evidence. They are typically made of foam or foil. Some liners are unnecessarily hard to use. It helps when there is a tab that users can grasp for easy removal.

A different type of liner offered by beverage cap suppliers and used for years by carbonated beverage and fruit drink manufacturers is a compression liner seal. Compression liners are found on the inside top of the cap and are formed by a secondary molding process. They are a permanent part of the cap and are not removed after opening. Compression liners are made of soft plastic and are meant to hug imperfections on the top lip of the bottle, maximizing the sealing capabilities of the cap.

Like press-on caps, threaded caps usually include some form of safety ring, either one that has a pull-tab and unwinds from the cap, or one that separates itself from the cap when the cap is twisted. Some suppliers offer tamper-evident rings that remain with the cap after the first opening. It is then removed from the cap and discarded. Consumers like this feature because it eliminates the possibility of a forgotten ring on the bottleneck from falling into a glass during pouring.



Reusable bottles designed in the likeness of kid's favorite cartoon characters, which includes character squeeze caps, command a higher suggested retail price than similar beverages, making these drinks more profitable to both the manufacturer and retailer.

There is no rule that says a milk cap, particularly for single-serve bottles, must be 38mm. In fact, 28mm caps, such as those used on soft drinks and sports beverages are starting to show up on milk beverages in an effort to more closely resemble the drinking experience of these other beverages. These caps can include a dispensing or sports closure for added convenience drinking. Some suppliers offer 38mm sports closures that complement traditional

38mm capping equipment.

Larger caps (43mm) are also popular on some single-serve bottles. Larger openings provide for a "chug-a-lug" effect.

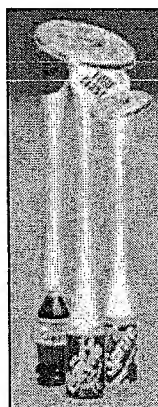
Plastic caps can be designed in a variety of patterns, which can be used to offer consumers an improved gripping surface. The more firm the plastic from which the cap is made, the more design opportunities that exist, such as unique grooves or rounded edges. Such designs turn ordinary single-serve bottles of milk into cool beverages.

Consumers become familiar with unique, proprietary cap designs and this enhances the brand value. For example, Milk Chug® and NesQuik® bottles both possess distinctive caps that consumers readily identify with the respective brand.

It is important to note that not all caps work on all bottle materials. It is important to work closely with your supplier to make sure the desired cap design complements the bottle in order to properly contain product and provide maximum quality and safety.

Not to be forgotten, milk cartons can become easier to open with the addition of plastic spouts.

The juice industry learned this about ten years ago and consumers have come to expect this feature on half-gallon cartons. Such spouts comprise a threaded finish, much like that of bottle, and a matching threaded cap. They make traditional paperboard milk cartons recloseable, shakeable and tamper evident. There are a wide variety of spouts from which to choose. Options include size, color, pattern and tamper-evident features.



Who says beverage cans can't boast creative closures? It's not Coca-Cola. Special "pop-top" cans join the ranks of bottle caps to offer consumers cash prizes and other incentives.

Marketing features of caps

All flat-top plastic caps can sport printed labels or for that matter be printed on directly, not just to inform consumers to the type of milk inside but also for various promotions. Imagine if gallon caps were dressed with Disney characters. Kids might anxiously finish off a gallon of milk just to buy another to build their cap collection.

Labels can feature instant coupons such as "\$1.00 off the purchase of this gallon of milk and a box of cereal."

Caps can be embossed with a milk's brand to build awareness.

Caps that include a liner and safety ring can use the inside of the cap as a contest piece or proof of purchase for a variety of promotions. Imagine "millionaire milk." The question and four possible answers are located on a label on the top of the cap and the answer is either inside the cap or on the liner.

Caps can come in cool colors such as translucent purple and neon yellow and foil liners can have holographic designs--a far cry from the milk industry's standard red, blue and pink for caps and white or foil for liners. Why not have the white liner sport a pumpkin at Halloween or a flag for Independence Day?

Closures just for kids

Beverage marketers know value-added packaging is a great way to reach the very important and profitable kid consumer segment. Kids want entertaining and interactive packaging, and the bottle cap is a great way to appeal to this group.

Atlanta-based In Zone Brands Inc., commands \$1.99 to \$2.99 per 12-fl-oz bottle of BellyWashers™, a 100% vitamin C-fortified juice drink packed in collectable, refillable sports bottles with toppers created in the likeness of high kid-appeal cartoon characters.



"It's the collectability of the line that keeps the kids coming back for more," adds Jim Scott, pres. and CEO. "And kid-driven purchases are a critical component in the growing non-carbonated beverage market." To keep kids interested, new characters are introduced into the line every 60 to 90 days, while others get retired.

In Zone's approach may be a bit dramatic for some of today's fluid milk marketers, but the key here is that In Zone maximizes the value of its package to appeal to kids, and the suggested retail price and sales results confirm the approach is profitable.

Another creative kid-focused cap concept is used by Brazil's Ambev, which offers a drink beverage bottle featuring a full-body shrink sleeve label sporting various Pokemon® characters along with a cap that, when twisted open, releases a small Pokemon toy.

Twist-open caps are not the only option for fluid beverages. Coffee-Mate's new, unique resealable flip-top lid makes plastic bottles easier to open and easier to pour - a packaging feature that could also benefit dairy products.

A few years ago, Country Fresh Dairy, a Dean Foods Co., Grand Rapids, Mi., marketed a multi-pack of half-pint milk bottles to kids called Milk-It!® The lightweight, squeezable bottles were made of low-density polyethylene and topped with an innovative, spill-proof cap that formed a squeeze spout after a tamper-evident device was removed.

The opportunities are endless when it comes to creating a cap to more effectively market milk. Top it off right!

Safety and Quality Package

Features

More than ever before, today's consumer craves a sense of security. Fluid milk manufacturers have a chance to be leaders during these unsure times by offering consumers the safest and highest quality milk. This is accomplished through the use of tamper-evident features. When danger is locked out, freshness is sealed in.



Foil closures on single-serve bottles create a hermetic seal that helps extend shelflife. On plastic gallons, foil seals prevent leakage.

Tamper evidence is not a legal issue in the food industry; it's an emotional one. Therefore, when you include tamper-evident features, make sure you bring it to consumers' attention. Point it out on the container, in ads and through in-store promotions such as shelf danglers. Safe and secure packaging is a marketing tool that turns ordinary milk into a comfort food.

Keep in mind, consumers are usually willing to spend a little bit more for safety and quality, but they need to be informed about these features again and again.

First in line for safety

When shopping the dairy case, consumers want the primary tamper-evident feature to be apparent.

A plastic bottle's first line of defense in efforts to ensure safety comes in the form of a tamper-evident feature with the actual cap. The three most common features are a safety ring, shrink-wrap band and extended shrink-wrap sleeve.

Safety rings, by far, are the most common tamper-evident feature on single-serve plastic bottles and large volume plastic jugs. However, they are only good as long as they work, and there are many low-quality caps in the marketplace that can be gently twisted open without breaking the ring. This only needs to happen once to a consumer and all faith is lost in a manufacturer.

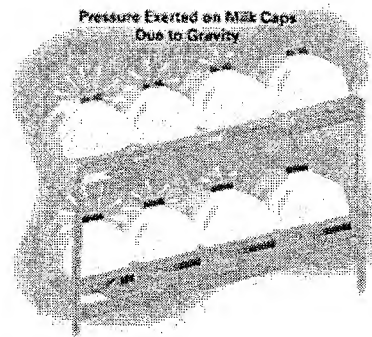
Suppliers involved with both bottle molds and caps can help you identify a closure system that prevents this undesirable situation. One such solution is an anti-rotational feature on the bottle's neck. For example, the bottle's neck can have a reverse lug design that does not allow cap rotation in either direction until the tamper-evident band is removed. For a marketer to benefit from a bottle with this feature, it must be brought to the consumers' attention. Caps can be imprinted with statements such as "Safely sealed tight when cap doesn't turn."

Though not common on refrigerated milk products but appearing occasionally on shelf-stable dairy-based drinks, shrink-wrap bands are easy to apply and relatively inexpensive, particularly if they are already used on other products in a dairy, i.e., sour cream, yogurt, etc. Shrink-wrap bands can act as colorful billboard space to catch the consumer's eye when shopping the dairy case. Shrink-wrap bands boldly printed with the phrase "safety

sealed in" assure customers that no one has tampered with the product. However, keep in mind that improperly fitted shrink-wrap bands can also sometimes be re-moved without breaking apart. To prevent this unfortunate occurrence, shrink-wrap bands must be properly fitted and positioned and heat tunnel time and temperatures constantly monitored.

For single-serve bottle manufacturers who choose to use full-body shrink labels, it is quite easy and inexpensive to design the label to extend over the cap and include a perforation for easy twist off. This feature nicely complements caps that include a heat induction sealed liner.

Shrink-wrap bands and extended full-body shrink labels are not a primary tamper-evident option for spouts on cartons; however, external safety rings do the trick.



Studies show that the front gallon package may experience as much as 15 lbs. of pressure when refrigerated shelves are angled at 30 degrees.

Secondary safety features enhance quality

In addition to the tamper-evident feature on the cap, an inner seal provides consumers with added security. For plastic bottles, the seal is typically foam or foil. With spouts on cartons, the seal could also be a plastic pull ring.

Foam and foil seals are applied to caps through a heat-induction process. It is very important that the process be monitored to ensure proper sealing. An improperly sealed product not only is a waste of labor and materials, but it also is an indicator of a manufacturer's inadequate quality assurance program.

Various induction-sealing systems are available to bottlers. In general, lined caps are applied to a bottle with the proper amount of torque to create a closed system. The container passes through the sealing system, where the cap is exposed to heat, which causes a sealant layer to melt and bond to the bottle opening.

Foil seals, when properly applied, are capable of creating a hermetic seal. This is extremely important with extended shelflife bottling systems.

Keep in mind that consumers appreciate the added security of these seals; however, they can become frustrated when the seal is difficult to open. Small flaps or tabs assist consumers with easy removal.

Nobody wants gallons to leak

The most apparent perceived breach in fluid milk safety comes from plastic gallons. This is because plastic gallons, which are lightweight and not very sturdy, are typically retailed in gravity-fed shelves. The force of gravity exerts pressure on the jug. Depending on the type and effectiveness of the cap and closure system, milk jugs can leak.

This results in a mess, which consumers perceive as an indicator of poor quality and freshness, and also raises the question of safety. Retailers simply get irritated.

High-quality cap and closure systems, when properly applied, provide a strong seal, which prevents milk from being exposed to airborne contaminants, unpleasant odors and smells, and from leaking. Leaking is probably the least detrimental to product quality and freshness, but to consumers and retailers, it's the worst aesthetically.

Friendly dispensing closures

As fluid milk marketers explore the many options available to them in the caps and closures arena, dispensing closures, often referred to as sport caps, are becoming more attractive, particularly for flavored-milk beverages positioned as refreshing drinks.

All of the aforementioned tamper-evident features apply to such dispensing closures. However, there are additional user-friendly options that can be included.

One is the overcap, which is designed to protect the push-pull closure mouthpiece from contamination. Push-pull closures are composed of a valve and bottle seal. Some suppliers offer overcaps designed to push the valve closed when pressure is applied, making it seal completely. This design feature prevents leakage even when the bottle is turned upside down, which is an improvement over many current designs that can give consumers a false sense of security when the overcap is applied.

Another is a pinchproof push-pull closure, an important feature for dispensing closures for kids' drinks. Such closures are designed so that when the spout is opened it remains retracted in the base, allowing no gap for potential pinching when pushed closed by either little hands or the mouth.

Contact Information for Suppliers of Products Mentioned

Caps and closures:

Alcoa Closure Systems International 317/481-4203	International Plastics & Equipment Corp. 800/377-4732
Berry Plastics Corp. 812/424-2904	Owens-Illinois Closures Inc. 800/537-0178
Blackhawk Molding Corp. 630/543-3900	The PopStraw Co. 810/773-9940
Blue Ridge 828/454-0684	Portola Packaging Inc. 408/441-1958
Cap Design International Ltd. 818/422-2285	Rexam Closures & Containers 812/867-6671
Consumer Cap Corp. 888/545-5504	U.S. Cap Systems Corp. 800/584-9160
Creative Packaging Corp. 847/808-7200	

Elopak
248/486-4600

White Cap Inc.
630/515-8383

International Paper
901/763-6157

Tamper-evident seals and bands:

American Bank Note
Holographics Inc.
914/592-2355

Halpak Plastics Inc.
516/242-1100

American Fuji Seal Inc.
800/533-3854

ITW Auto-Sleeve
800/852-4571

Ameri-Seal Inc.
800/220-7981

Pechiney Plastics
Packaging
330/923-5281

Berry Plastics Corp.
812/424-2904

Seal-It Inc.
800/325-3965

Gilbreth Packaging Systems
800/758-5888

SleeveCo Inc.
800/624-0204

H.S. Crocker Co.
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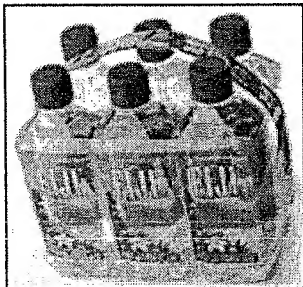
Non-carbonated drink and water marketers are continuously exploring package options to give them an edge in the competitive beverage industry. Fluid milk manufacturers must also treat the package as a dynamic component of the overall product, one that requires continuous updating.

Dannon Waters of North America has rolled out the first PET gallon bottle, saying that this gallon jug of water is designed to meet the needs of families for home and tabletop use. The company boasts the new item as a "Clear Bottle for Better Taste." For easy pouring, the proprietary raindrop-shaped jug, which incorporates Dannon's trademark wave



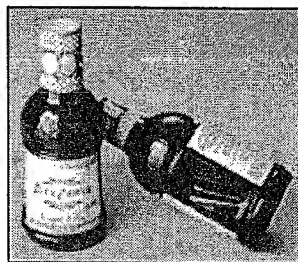
pattern throughout, includes a handle with contoured finger holds. The Dannon logo is blow-molded on two sides of the bottle near the neck for enhanced brand identity.

Just like fluid milk, gallon jugs are the largest percent of total water volume. Yet, also like fluid milk, jug sales have not kept up with the double-digit growth of the single-serving size. "With this clear innovation, retailers will have the opportunity to revitalize their jug sales by getting new users into jug consumption," says Jean-Phillippe Martin, dir. of marketing for Dannon Natural Spring Water.



Another industry first goes to Arizona Beverages, which has built its business on single-serve glass bottles and is now extending the line to include multi-serving PET bottles. It does this with a 42-oz longneck bottle, which is characteristic of Arizona bottles, and includes a double-sided grip feature designed for easier pouring. The bottle also includes a blow-molded Arizona logo. An important enhancement to this innovative new package is a multi-layer, oxygen scavenger system for unsurpassed product protection.

Water direct from the Fiji Islands distinguishes itself from other bottled waters by using the clear PET bottle to display a three-dimensional tropical flowers and waterfall scene. The flowers are printed on the front clear plastic label, while the waterfall is printed on the inside of the back paper label. Colorful multi-pack handles continue the tropical theme.



Young Hawaiian Punch consumers are getting what they want--the great taste of this tropical drink in an innovative, clear flexible package. Mott's Inc. is replacing its nine-pack juice box line with stand-up pouches. The patented pouch is the first pouch to include clear areas where consumers can see the vibrant colors of what's inside. In addition, the hourglass shape of the pouch fits easily into kids' hands while consuming product through the provided straw.

Straw-in-Bottle Adds Value to Package

Adding value to single-serve bottles comes in many ways. For Quality Dairy Co. (QDC), Lansing, Mich., it's adding a straw that pops through the mouth of the bottle as soon as the cap is removed.

The concept of combining straw with single-serve container is based on extensive consumer research within the packaging and beverage industries, which was conducted by The PopStraw Co. (TPC), Detroit,



Mich., innovators of the patented PopStraw Inside™. Inserted at the bottling/filling stage into traditional PET plastic beverage bottles, the technology assures that the buoyancy-enhanced straw, which consists of FDA-approved polypropylene, appears on command, every time. The straw provides a fun, sanitary and ideal way for consumers to enjoy milk and other beverages on-the-go without the worry of spilling, tipping, splashing or the inconvenience of paper-wrapped or unsanitary conventional straws.

"By adding PopStraw to our 16-oz single-serve milk, water and juice, we experienced a great market impact because innovative value-added concepts like PopStraw are mandatory in this business," says Stan Martin, QDC president. "We added PopStraw to a number of our beverage items and watched our milk and juice sales increase significantly."

The response from all ages and socio-economic backgrounds has been overwhelmingly positive. QDC's unit volume sales surged 14% in milk bottles with PopStraw compared to the same 13-week period a year ago. The company reports that this double-digit increase occurred despite a 10-cent increase in retail selling price. This sales increase indicates that consumers recognize the value of enhanced packaging and are willing to pay for it.

This was further confirmed by an independent telephone survey conducted by Chicago-based Communications Research Inc., among consumers who provided contact information after submitting a hangtag from QDC with PopStraw Inside beverage containers. Consumers commented that they like the PopStraw feature because it made the product more convenient, less messy, less likely to spill, easy for kids to use, good for use in the car and easy to drink from. Of those consumers who indicated they would purchase the PopStraw product again, 87% said they would purchase the product at least once a week. Among those consumers who were aware PopStraw was inside the container prior to purchase, 32% said the PopStraw feature was extremely important to their purchase decision. Moreover, 9% said PopStraw Inside prompted their trial of the beverage.

This supports that there is a great deal of power in value-added packaging features for the beverage marketer.

Dairy Processors Aggressively Market Milk with Packaging

The prior three issues of "Packaging Opportunities for Fluid Milk" presented dairy processors with ideas on how to use package features to market milk. Here are examples of recently introduced milk beverages that exemplify packaging at its best.

Des Moines, Iowa-based Anderson Erickson Dairy spices up its single-serve bottle line with a flashy name and signature PET bottle. New Icy Cold to Go! bottles feature a



contoured neckline that includes pronounced, blow-molded AE logos to build brand identity.

The Dannon Co., Tarrytown, N.Y., takes its single-serve Frusion™ fruit 'n' yogurt smoothie line to club stores. This convenience beverage was originally marketed solely through c-stores, appealing to commuters looking for a nutritious breakfast-on-the-run beverage. Due to its overwhelming success, Dannon decided to make the product available in multi-packs for added convenience. A cardboard top and bottom reinforce the shrink-wrapped six-pack. The cardboard also provides space for promotions and brand building.

Brand and character licensing helps sell consumer products ranging from toothpaste to snack crackers. It helps market milk too.

Single-serve fluid milk marketing leader Smith Dairy Products Co., Orrville, Ohio, showed consumers that there is more to baseball than a cold beer and peanuts. The company teamed up with Major League Baseball to develop packaging that features all 30 team insignias for either the American League or the National League. The bottles were sold this summer at grocery stores as a Limited Edition, turning them into collectibles for baseball fans of all ages.



Smith Dairy repeatedly uses full-body stretch sleeves on its single-serve milk bottles to more effectively market milk. "Our challenge is to create excitement in the dairy case or cooler door," says Bill McCabe, v.p. of marketing. "By offering new product packaging like the Major League Baseball Moovers™, the consumer's shopping experience is more interesting and fun."

Dairies are realizing that with the right package, product development has no limit. What was once only available either at a coffee bar or in shelf-stable glass bottles now comes fresh from your grocers' dairy case. Designed not to look just like another bottle of flavored milk, new Folgers® Jakada™ is a joint venture between Morningstar Foods Inc., a subsidiary of Suiza Foods Corp., Dallas, and The Procter & Gamble Co., Cincinnati. Jakada is the first chilled coffee-milk drink made from Mountain Grown® Folgers coffee and low-fat milk.



The trend in larger volume plastic jugs is to use opaque resin in order to spare the milk from nutrient and flavor loss through light oxidation. Exposure to light need not be lengthy for the product to suffer. With direct sunlight, oxidation starts in as little as four minutes; with fluorescent lighting, it's as little as four hours.

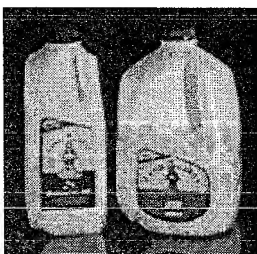
For Crowley Foods, Binghamton, N.Y., after the rollout of its PenSupreme's Flavor Savor™ bottle, sales at growth-



target accounts climbed 40%, while margins increased 2%.

"Seeing increases of this size in both sales and margins is really gratifying," says Jerry Gaube, special projects mgr. "You don't often see these kinds of numbers in mature markets like ours. This is an unqualified success for PenSupreme."

Gaube attributes the success to the bottle itself, and the effort put into launching it. The Flavor Savor bottle is an opaque white plastic container that uses eye-catching labeling to give the bottle a vibrant appearance in the dairy case.



Franklin Park, Ill.-based Dean Foods Co. also uses similar opaque resin for its Land O'Lake's brand half-gallon and gallon jugs of milk.

"Because research shows that oxidation degrades milk's taste and its nutritional value, we developed the FlavorTight™ packaging," says Pat Graiziger, v.p. of sales and marketing. "[The FlavorTight bottle] is like making nature's perfect food even better."

Around the World

An extremely dynamic package hit supermarkets this past summer in the United Kingdom. And better yet for the dairy industry, it contains a milk-based beverage. The new self-heating Nescafé Hot When You Want coffee milk drink comes in a three-piece steel can with an internal volume of 11.16 oz (330 ml). To make room for the water and quicklime heat-generating chamber, which consumes a significant portion of the can's interior, the can holds only 7.1oz (210 ml) of fluid. Heating is activated by pushing in a button on the base of the can, which produces a chemical reaction between the water and quicklime.



The outer shell is as impressive as the inside. Unlike other beverage cans, this can must protect the consumer from the 140°F that is reached when the heating system is activated. This is accomplished through a combination of an insulated corrugated liner with a specially developed outer shrink sleeve film

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